

**Chief of Naval Operations (CNO)
Adm. Gary Roughead Delivers Remarks at
Naval War College Graduation
June 10, 2011**

Thank you and it's great to be back in Newport for the second time this week. My staff in Washington thinks I have ulterior motives when I come up here. It really is terrific to be back at the Naval War College and to be with so many extraordinary people who are here today. To the faculty and staff, I thank you for what you do the service that you render not only to our navy, but to our armed forces and to the nation. To the distinguished guests, thank you for being here and for your support of the students, this institution of for the Navy in Newport.

To our attaché corps, personal and hardy welcome to all of you. it is my pleasure as my time as the Chief of Naval Operations to come to know you and to be able to work closely with you and your leaders in bringing our navies and our nations together, thank you so much for making the trip up here to Newport.

To the families and friends of those who are graduating today, I thank you for what you do, what you have done and most importantly what you will continue to do to support spouse, your son, your daughter, perhaps brother or sister, that support is absolutely critical to the students who are here today. It has been a great year; it has been a great time to be here. But it is just beginning. I would just like to share some thoughts with you.

This is clearly the season for commencements. I've had to opportunity to do a couple in the last few weeks, but the course work you have done here, the engagement that you have just gone through the course of your studies, as well as the experiences that you have had, the ideas you've been exposed to here at our navy's 'home of thought' are really unique among the other graduations that are taking place across our nation during this season. And this is as it should be, for we will ask more of you and much more of your families going forward, things quite unlike the challenges others will face.

Today is an opportunity to consider the environments to which you will return in short order – to your services, to your agencies, to your nation – to continue your promising careers and your contributions in our common interests for a more peaceful world.

Today is also a wonderful chance as I have already done, to recognize the contributions of the families who stand behind you. I think that if there was one thing you did not learn at the War College, that you did not have to learn is the important role that your families play in the ability to do your work.

Whatever your community, service, agency, or nation, I trust your experience here at the U.S. Naval War College has been worthwhile, and has taken advantage of a truly unique institution. For 127 years, the Naval War College has been the place to which we in the Navy return to strengthen our understanding of our maritime foundation and our naval foundation; one that is like the sea, at once timeless and inherently adaptive.

Newport helps those of us to keep one hand on the past while reaching for the navy, for the service, for the agency, that we must be in the future, but it is also manifestly a place for future leaders of any institution to design, to debate, to test and to prove operational concepts and strategic approaches to the toughest questions.

Earlier this year, nationally renowned columnist George Will characterized the work done here at the War College as thoughtful scholarship on the most fundamental aspects of global order.

the power of those who are here today mid-way through your promising careers from all over the world who converge here to study foreign policy, national strategy and military operations with an eye towards the application of those disciplines to our collective security stands as a signal that we will never stop searching for ways to prevail in peace, even if our world is becoming less stable in its growing complexity.

Precisely because of the trends we see, in fact, the thinking done here has never been more important. Senator Lugar reminded those who sat in your seats here just five years ago that “we should be planning for transformational events” – not only to react to them but to shape them to the extent that we are able to do so. He said that five years ago and I think that time has proven him correct.

Just as the Naval War College attempts to do with wargaming, which, as Peter Perla and Ed McGrady wrote in the most recent Naval War College review, must tackle the inconvenient truths of our circumstances and our current plans if we are “to deal effectively with the black swans... we prefer not to think about.”

You have likely gained an appreciation in your time here that there are constants in our global environment today. Sovereignty concerns as old as the nation-state will continue to weigh heavily in our world and will likely become more acute; global trade and economic realities will continue to direct the interactions of states; the speed of those interactions in the information age will continue to increase with broadly positive impacts on our world; but the increased speed with which events develop in the information age will challenge our collective ability to anticipate the impact of local frictions that will invariably arise within a global system in which we live.

A quick scan of the horizon today shows the stakes of growing complexity, and the disorder following from that, are high: the inevitable impacts of Japans’ earthquake gave us a concrete example of how new challenges may arise unexpectedly from calm seas; the unacceptable actions of the Libyan regime have already driven mass migration, impacted global energy markets, and required a broad international response; developments in Egypt continue to evolve, where an orderly transition remains so important for a region undergoing extraordinary change.

Meanwhile, a long season of dangerous provocations on the Korean peninsula has passed without a meaningful return to leadership talks between north and south; international talks with Iran on its nuclear program ended earlier this year without any headway; and dynamics in the south china sea raise questions about the sustainability of a global rules-based system without the united states’ participation as a party to the law of the sea convention.

What is more, many of our nations have fundamental economic concerns in the wake of the global financial crisis that continue to inform the ‘art of the possible’ in our multilateral operations. This is the context in which you will return to the practice of defense and security, and one thing is abundantly clear: our partnerships at all levels, which you have made a down payment on here in Newport, will be more vital than ever.

In our joint operations, we are pursuing interdependence where it helps the nation maintain capability, capacity, & dominance across all of the domains; air, sea, space and cyberspace as proliferation deepens and potential adversaries threaten the access we have come to rely on.

In our multinational operations, I look forward to what we can accomplish together in the interests of security and prosperity. More than an aspiration, I see it as a requirement for our complex information age, where global trends in economics, demographics, natural resource constraints and climate change will generate effects that more people will experience more directly than in the past.

Plans of action which fail to begin and end with cooperative international responses have always been suboptimal, but now will be more limited in their potential impact. These trends and the intricacy associated with events in an information age are easy for national security professionals to see.

We know from first-hand operational experience of the enduring value of relationships, we see the potential of global partnerships to address common tests, and we are in the business of preserving options; options that have always been explored first at our Naval War College.

Some may view the changes that we see today and the prognosis for tomorrow with pessimism or trepidation. But for you, I see great opportunity, opportunity to shape and lead, opportunity to bring to bear the benefits of a Naval War College perspective for the complexities of our time.

All of you here today, with the backgrounds and relationships you now have, make me very confident we will chart a safe course through some challenging times and successfully shape tomorrow for future generations.

Be confident that you are well-equipped for what lies ahead of you as military leaders, defense and security experts, and don't forget that few, very few, are as well prepared as you. Few have had this time to recharge and to think, to question and to debate. Few have had this opportunity to truly open their minds to opposing views, which will serve you – and all of us, by extension – so well as you go forward.

I congratulate you on your accomplishments. I thank you for everything you have done. But most importantly I thank you for all that you will do in the years ahead to bring peace and prosperity to our world.

Thank you very much.